



North Dakota Department of Health

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Holds First Smallpox Vaccination Clinic

BISMARCK, N.D. — Several health workers rolled up their sleeves to receive a smallpox vaccination today as North Dakota began the first phase of its smallpox vaccination program. The vaccination clinic was held at the Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health Unit in Bismarck, N.D.

Among this morning's volunteers were Dr. Terry Dwelle, state health officer, North Dakota Dept. of Health; Kim Carr, R.N., M.P.H., Infection Control director, Medcenter One; and Sheila Heinert, R.N., Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health. These people are among the group of North Dakota volunteers who will form the Smallpox Response Team responsible for investigating possible or confirmed outbreaks of smallpox and treating initial victims of smallpox.

"This is a historic day in our state," Dwelle said. "Health care professionals across North Dakota are stepping forward to serve others should the unthinkable situation of a smallpox case become a reality. These people represent hundreds of other public health employees and health care providers who have made the commitment to be prepared. I am extremely proud of all of our volunteers and the dedication to their fellow citizens that is being demonstrated today."

"Health care personnel volunteering for smallpox vaccination go through a detailed screening and educational process before getting the vaccine," said Paula Flanders, administrator, Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health. "Each volunteer receives a complete information packet prior to vaccination and views an 11-minute smallpox vaccine educational video just prior to vaccination." (*This packet of information is available at www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/vaccination/infopacket.asp*)

The vaccine does not contain smallpox, but rather a related, less harmful virus that is widely effective in giving immunity against the disease smallpox. Smallpox is a contagious viral disease that is fatal in as many as one-third of cases. Those who survive have lifelong immunity, although many become blind or suffer deep, pitted scars, especially on the face.

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“Because terrorists may possess smallpox and may be willing to use it as a bioweapon, North Dakota and the entire nation must be prepared,” Dwelle said. “This first phase of vaccination gives North Dakota the capability to investigate and treat the first victims of a smallpox outbreak while more widespread vaccination is performed. North Dakota’s Smallpox Response Teams will be prepared and available to treat smallpox victims anywhere in the state.”

Smallpox was declared eradicated by the World Health Organization in 1980 after a successful worldwide vaccination program. Now, authorities suspect it may be in the possession of terrorists who could use it as a weapon.

The federal government could subsequently authorize a second phase of smallpox vaccination for additional health care workers and first responders, such as police, firefighters and emergency medical technicians. The federal government does not recommend smallpox vaccination for the general public at this time. However, should a clear threat or actual outbreak occur anywhere, the United States has enough smallpox vaccine to vaccinate everyone in America.

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Please note: Fact sheets and other information about smallpox can be found on the following websites:

- North Dakota Department of Health – www.health.state.nd.us
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/smallpox/reference/resource-kit.asp
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – www.hhs.gov/smallpox

People who have questions or concerns about smallpox can call the following CDC phone numbers: 1.888.246.2675 (English); 1.888.246.2857 (Spanish); and 1.888.874.2646 (hearing impaired).

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